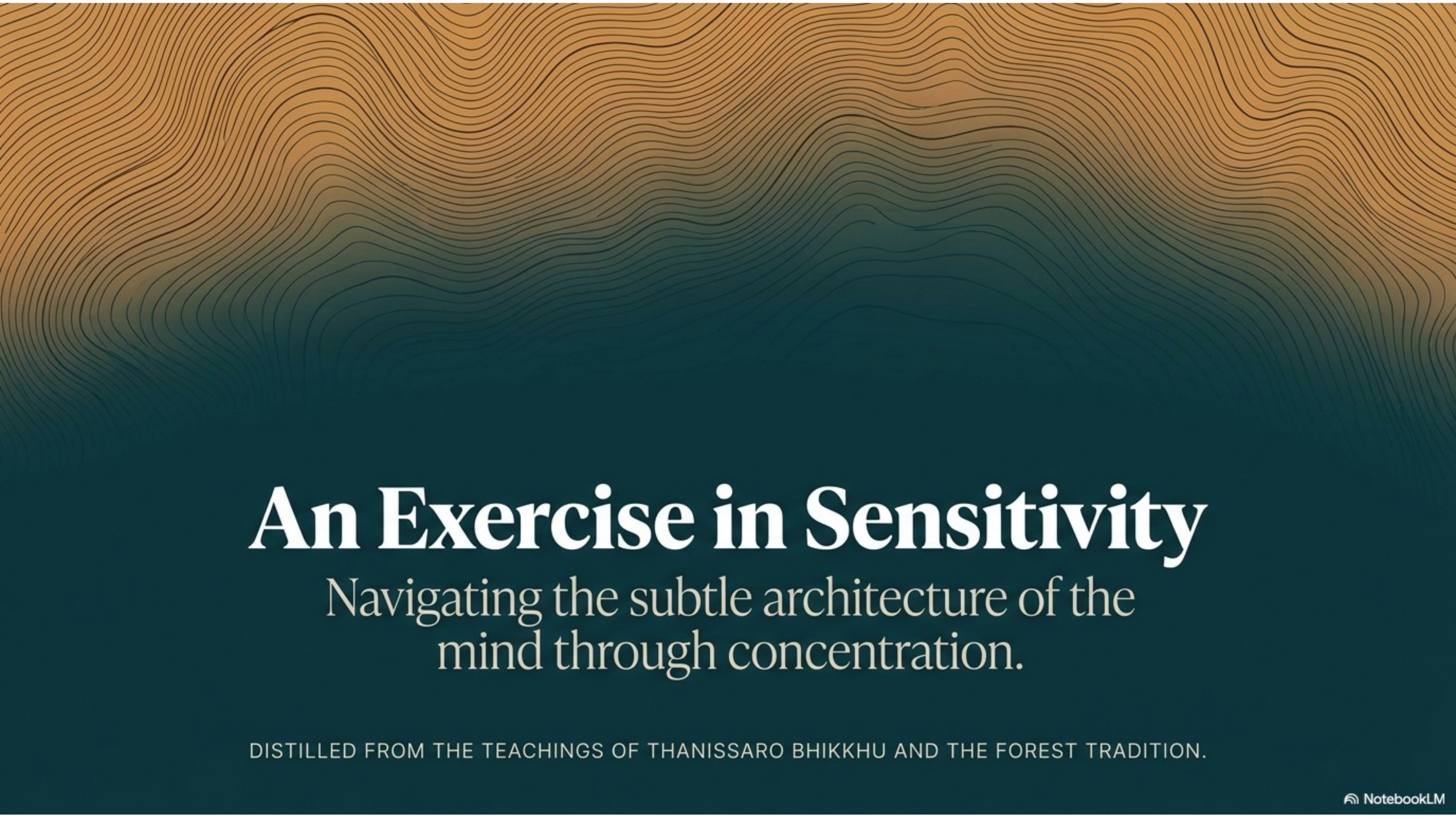
An Exercise in Sensitivity
Navigating the subtle architecture of the mind through concentration.
DISTILLED FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THANISSARO BHIKKHU AND THE FOREST TRADITION.
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Insight is an Act of Sensitivity, Not Recitation

~~The Dogma.~~

~~Insight is merely reciting the three characteristics of existence: Inconstancy, Stress, Not-Self.~~

The Practice.

Insight is the real-time ability to see what you are holding onto that causes suffering—and letting it go.

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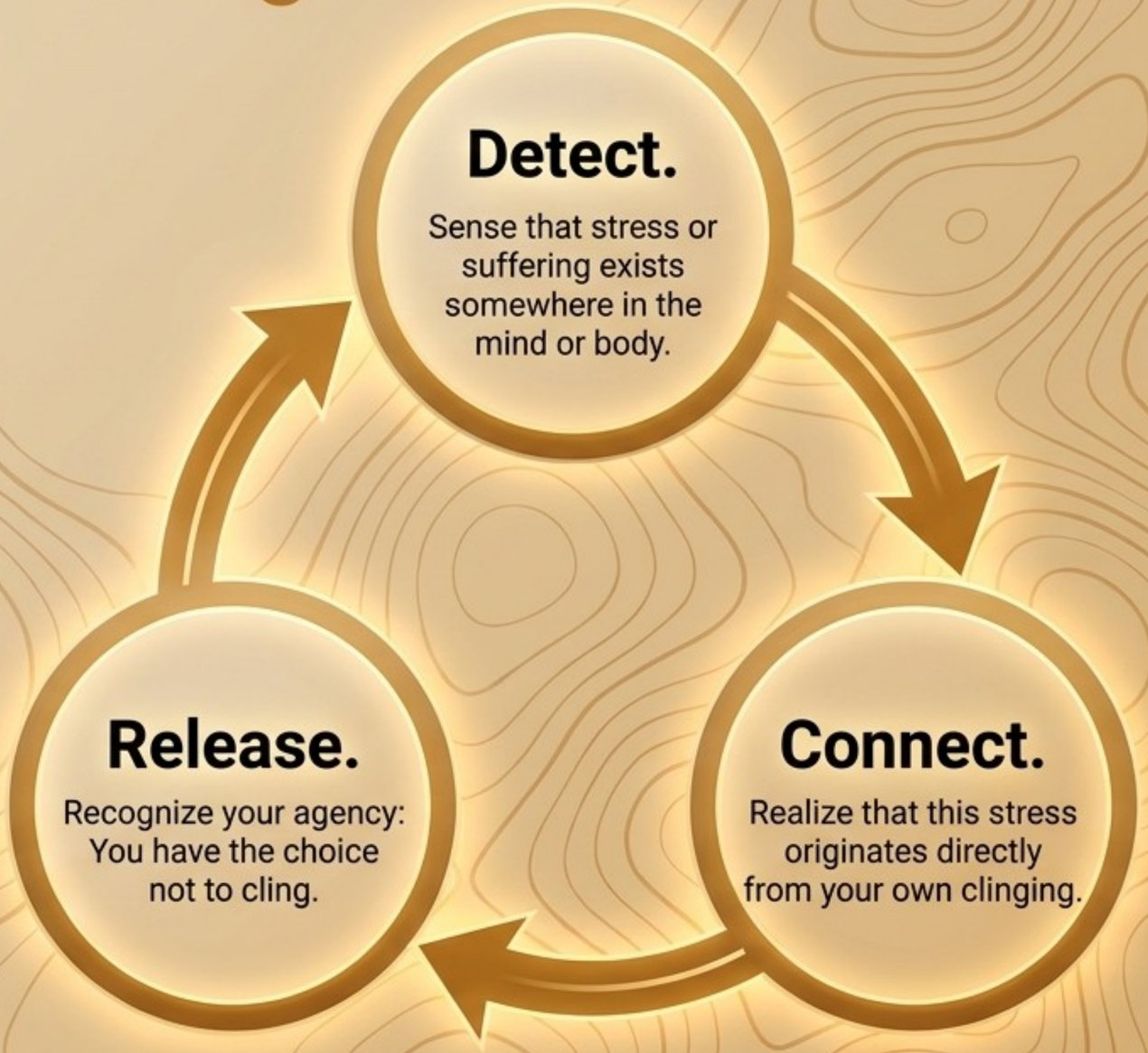
The Engine of Insight


Detect.
Sense that stress or suffering exists somewhere in the mind or body.
Connect.
Realize that this stress originates directly from your own clinging.
Release.
Recognize your agency: You have the choice not to cling.

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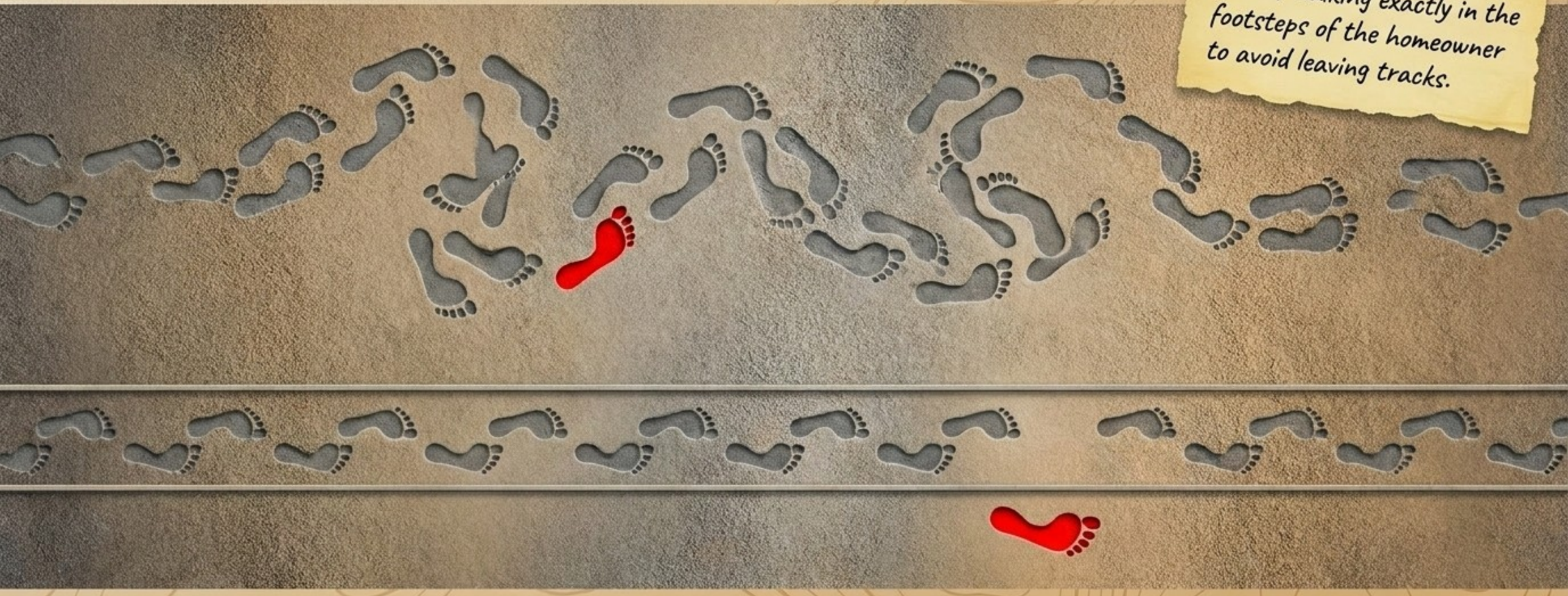
Defilements Hide in a Wandering Mind

Swam Roy (Thai) —
A thief walking exactly in the footsteps of the homeowner to avoid leaving tracks.



If you let your mind wander freely, negative states step right into your tracks unnoticed. You only understand the power of defilements when you put up resistance and try to get the mind under control.

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The Breath as a Diagnostic Tool

You must use your own powers of judgment to evaluate what feels best for you right now.

— Ajaan Lee's Method

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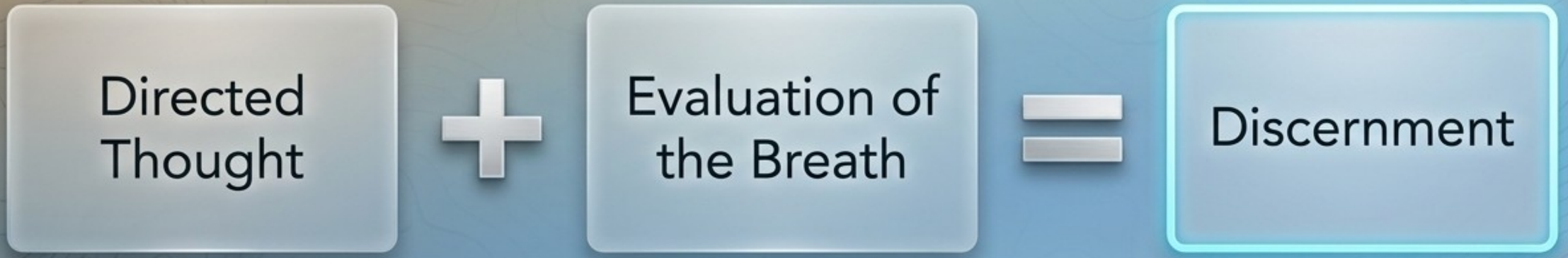
The Mechanics of Discernment



Discernment is fundamentally a value judgment. It is the real-time ability to answer: Which mental actions are worth the effort, and which are not?

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Map Your Own Topography

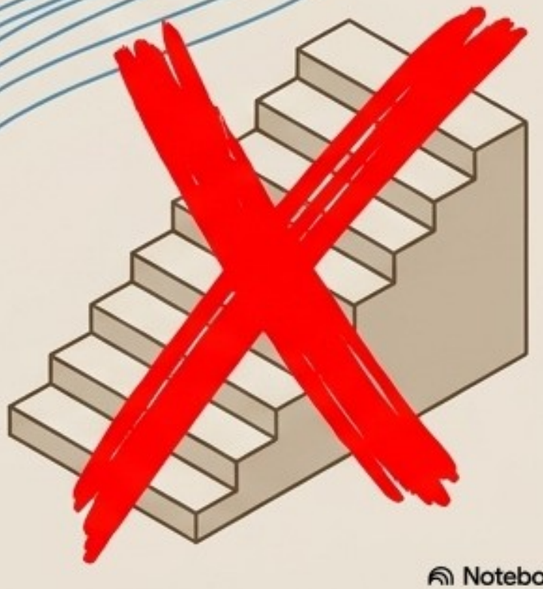
Map Your Own Topography

The ancient texts debate whether there are 3 or 5 rigid stages of settling down. Discard the molds.

When you hit a state that feels good, mentally put a Post-It note on it.

When you discover a state with less stress, place another.

Let your own sensitivity dictate the stages.



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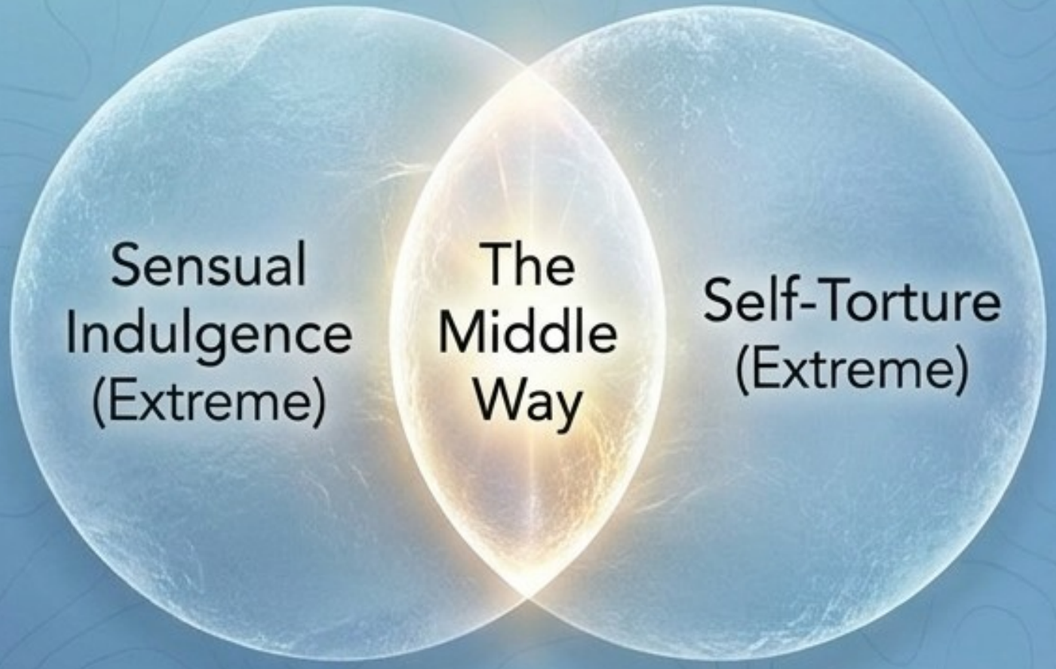
The Evolution of Pleasure



We usually run toward pleasure as the ultimate reward of life. In concentration, pleasure is used entirely differently—as nourishment and fuel to sustain the path.

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The Trap of Delusion Concentration

Working the job to earn the paycheck
(Maintaining breath focus to generate pleasure).

Quitting the job to enjoy the check
(Dropping the breath to zone out in misty pleasure).

Let the pleasure do its work in the body, but never lose your focus on the breath.

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Diagnostic Matrix of Mental States

	Wandering Mind	Delusion Concentration	Right Concentration
Stress Level	High	Low	Zero / Minimal
Focus	Low	Low	High
Discernment	Zero (Defilements hide completely)	Low (Misty, zoned out, unreliable)	High (Anchored to breath, highly sensitive)

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The Saturated Body

In the Fourth Jhana, the physical need to breathe ceases.

> You are not stifled. The body is so saturated with breath energy and well-being that everything is wide open. If energy is lacking in one area, it automatically shifts internally to fill the void.

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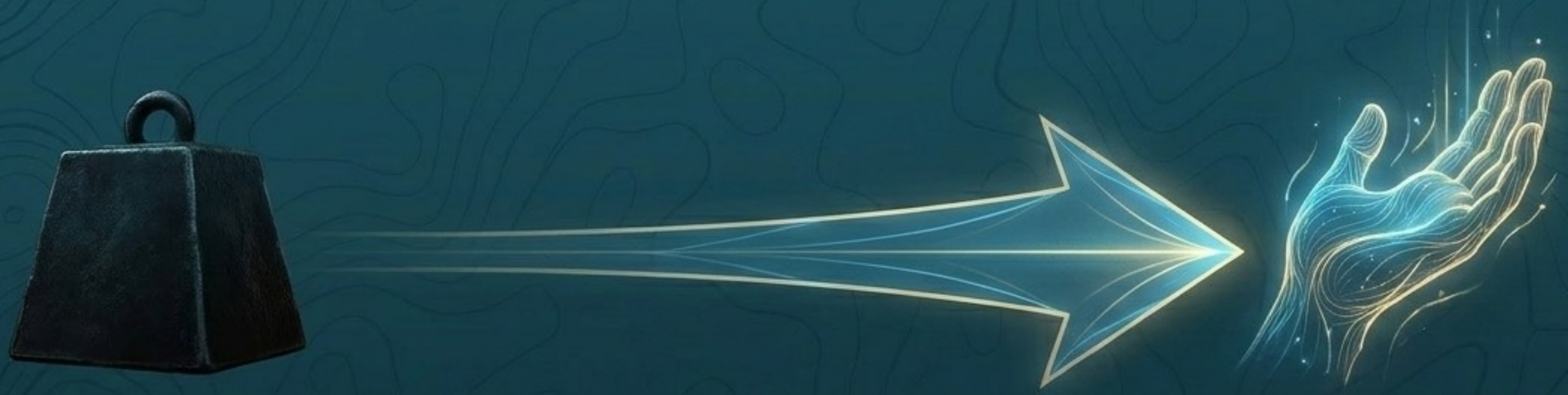
Equanimity is Not Defeat



The Misconception:

Equanimity is dull, uninteresting, or giving up on what we cannot change.

The Reality:

A highly desirable state surpassing strong rapture.

"It is the equanimity of being wonderfully full. When someone offers you more rich food, you simply say, No thanks, I am already well-fed."

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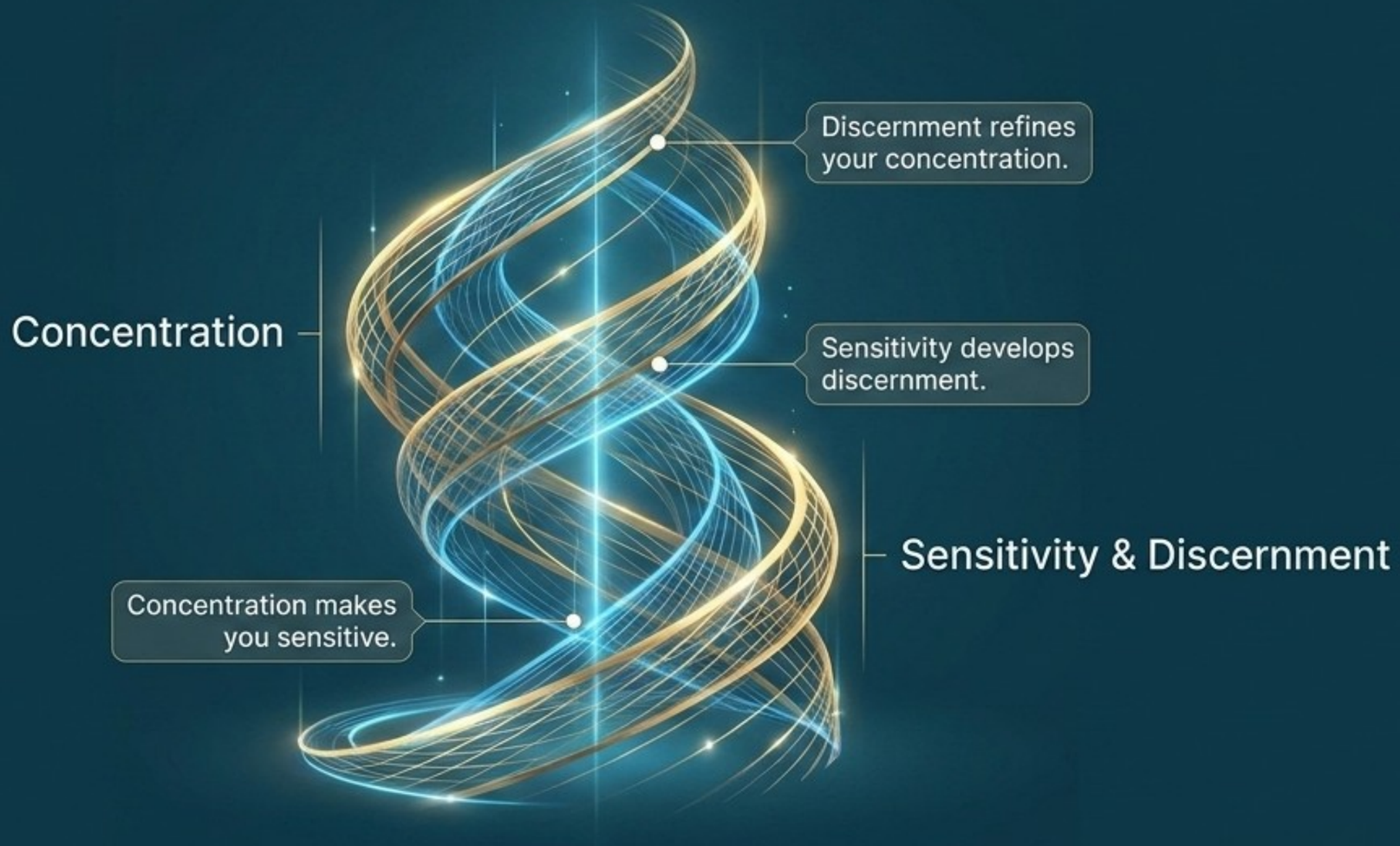
The Synergistic Path

Do not rush to advanced insights (Inconstancy, Not-self) at the drop of a hat.
You cannot apply them until concentration is strong.



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Try to get on good terms with the breath energy in the body. Develop a friendship that lasts.

Insight isn't parroting what you've heard. It comes from your own quest to understand feelings, find the best ones, and see exactly where that quest takes you.

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